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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-seventh year

Letter dated 25 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest incident of Palestinian terrorism directed against the citizens of Israel.

Yesterday evening, 23 September 2002, Palestinian gunmen shot and killed Shlomo Yitzhak Shapira, aged 48, and wounded three of his children as they walked through the city of Hebron. One of the injured was a child only 9 years old. The family had travelled from their home in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Sukkot at the Machpela Cave, a millennia-old shrine in the centre of the city holy to both Jews and Muslims. After firing on the Shapiras, the gunmen escaped into a nearby market under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority.

Israel holds the Palestinian leadership fully responsible for yesterday's repugnant attack, as it does for all Palestinian terror attacks emanating from the territory under its control. The Palestinian leadership has manifestly failed to fulfil its responsibilities to end all acts of terrorism and to prevent its territory from serving as a base for attacks on civilians.

Not only has the Palestinian leadership failed to take even minimal steps to fight terror, but it has also encouraged, financed and supported such attacks and defended their legitimacy. Even while it purports to condemn acts of terrorism, the Palestinian leadership continues to justify certain attacks as acts of "legitimate resistance". Even in the United Nations — an Organization whose constituent bodies and Secretary-General have repeatedly upheld the principle that no attacks on civilian targets can ever be justified — the Palestinian side has audaciously argued that some attacks against civilians are acts of "legitimate resistance" under international law, most recently in a statement in the course of the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on 5 August 2002.

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So long as Palestinians perceive attacks against Israelis as legitimate, these attacks are sure to continue. And so long as terrorist attacks continue, it will be impossible to arrive at a lasting political settlement.

Israel calls on the international community to condemn in the strongest terms these criminal acts of terrorism as well as the ongoing support and involvement of the current Palestinian leadership in their perpetration. Israel further calls on the Palestinian leadership to respect its obligations, to arrest terrorist leaders and bring them to justice, to end incitement in the official media and to end all support, both moral and practical, for acts of terrorism, in accordance with its signed commitments and the resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 1373.

I submit the present letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as an official document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 160, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism", and agenda item 36, entitled "The situation in the Middle East", and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative